WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for automatically assessing interest in a displayed product, the method comprising:

capturing image data within a predetermined proximity of the displayed product;

identifying people in the captured image data; and

assessing the interest in the displayed product based upon the identified people.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the identifying step identifies the number of people in the captured image data and the assessing step assesses the interest in the displayed product based upon the number of people identified.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the identifying step recognizes the behavior of the people in the captured image data and the assessing step assesses the interest in the displayed product based upon the recognized behavior of the people.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the recognized behavior is at least one of the average time spent in the predetermined proximity of the displayed product, the average time spent looking at the displayed product, the average time spent touching the displayed product, and the facial expression of the identified people.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising recognizing at least one characteristic of the people identified in the captured image data.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the at least one characteristic is chosen from a list consisting of gender and ethnicity.

7. A method for compiling data of at least one characteristic of people within a predetermined proximity of a displayed product, the method comprising;

capturing image data within the predetermined proximity of the displayed product;

identifying the people in the captured image data; and

recognizing at least one characteristic of the people identified.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the at least one characteristic is chosen from a list consisting of gender and ethnicity.

9. The method of claim 7, further comprising:

identifying the number of people in the captured image data; and

assessing interest in the displayed product based upon the number of people identified.

10. The method of claim 7, further comprising:

recognizing the behavior of the people identified in the captured image data; and

assessing interest in the displayed product based upon the recognized behavior of the people identified.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the recognized behavior is at least one of the average time spent in the predetermined proximity of the displayed product, the average time spent looking at the displayed product, the average time spent touching the displayed product, and the facial expression of the identified people.

12. A method for assessing interest in a displayed product, the method comprising:

recognizing speech of people within a predetermined proximity of the displayed product; and

assessing the interest in the displayed product based upon the recognized speech.

13. An apparatus for automatically assessing interest in a displayed product, the apparatus comprising:

at least one camera for capturing image data within a predetermined proximity of the displayed product;

identification means for identifying people in the captured image data; and

means for assessing the interest in the displayed product based upon the identified people.

14. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the identification means comprises means for identifying the number of people in the captured image data and the means for assessing assesses the interest in the displayed product based upon the number of people identified.

15. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the identification means comprises means for recognizing the behavior

of the people identified in the captured image data and the means for assessing assesses the interest in the displayed product based upon the recognized behavior.

16. The apparatus of claim 13, further comprising recognition means for recognizing at least one characteristic of the people identified in the captured image data.

17. An apparatus for compiling data of at least one characteristic of people within a predetermined proximity of a displayed product, the apparatus comprising;

at least one camera for capturing image data within a predetermined proximity of the displayed product;

identifying the people within the captured image data; and

recognizing at least one characteristic of the people identified.

18. An apparatus for assessing interest in a displayed product, the apparatus comprising:

at least one microphone for capturing audio data of people within a predetermined proximity of the displayed product;

means for recognizing speech of people from the captured audio data; and

means for assessing the interest in the displayed product based upon the recognized speech.

19. A computer program product embodied in a computer-readable medium for automatically assessing interest in a displayed product, the computer program product comprising:

computer readable program code means for capturing

image data within a predetermined proximity of the displayed product;

computer readable program code means for identifying people in the captured image data; and

computer readable program code means for assessing the interest in the displayed product based upon the identified people.

20. A computer program product embodied in a computer-readable medium for compiling data of at least one characteristic of people within a predetermined proximity of a displayed product, the computer program product comprising;

computer readable program code means for capturing image data within the predetermined proximity of the displayed product;

computer readable program code means for identifying the people in the captured image data; and

computer readable program code means for recognizing at least one characteristic of the people identified.

21. A computer program product embodied in a computer-readable medium for assessing interest in a displayed product, the method comprising:

computer readable program code means for recognizing speech of people within a predetermined proximity of the displayed product; and

computer readable program code means for assessing the interest in the displayed product based upon the recognized speech.

22. A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps for automatically assessing interest in a displayed product, the method comprising:

capturing image data within a predetermined proximity of the displayed product;

identifying people in the captured image data; and

assessing the interest in the displayed product based upon the identified people.

23. A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps for compiling data of at least one characteristic of people within a predetermined proximity of a displayed product, the method comprising;

capturing image data within the predetermined proximity of the displayed product;

identifying the people in the captured image data; and

recognizing at least one characteristic of the people identified.

24. A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps for assessing interest in a displayed product, the method comprising:

recognizing speech of people within a predetermined proximity of the displayed product; and

assessing the interest in the displayed product based upon the recognized speech.